

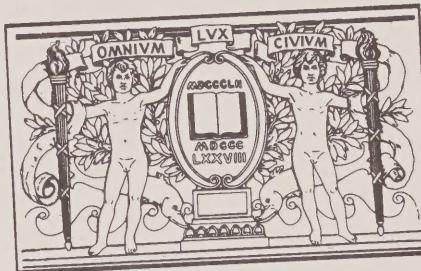
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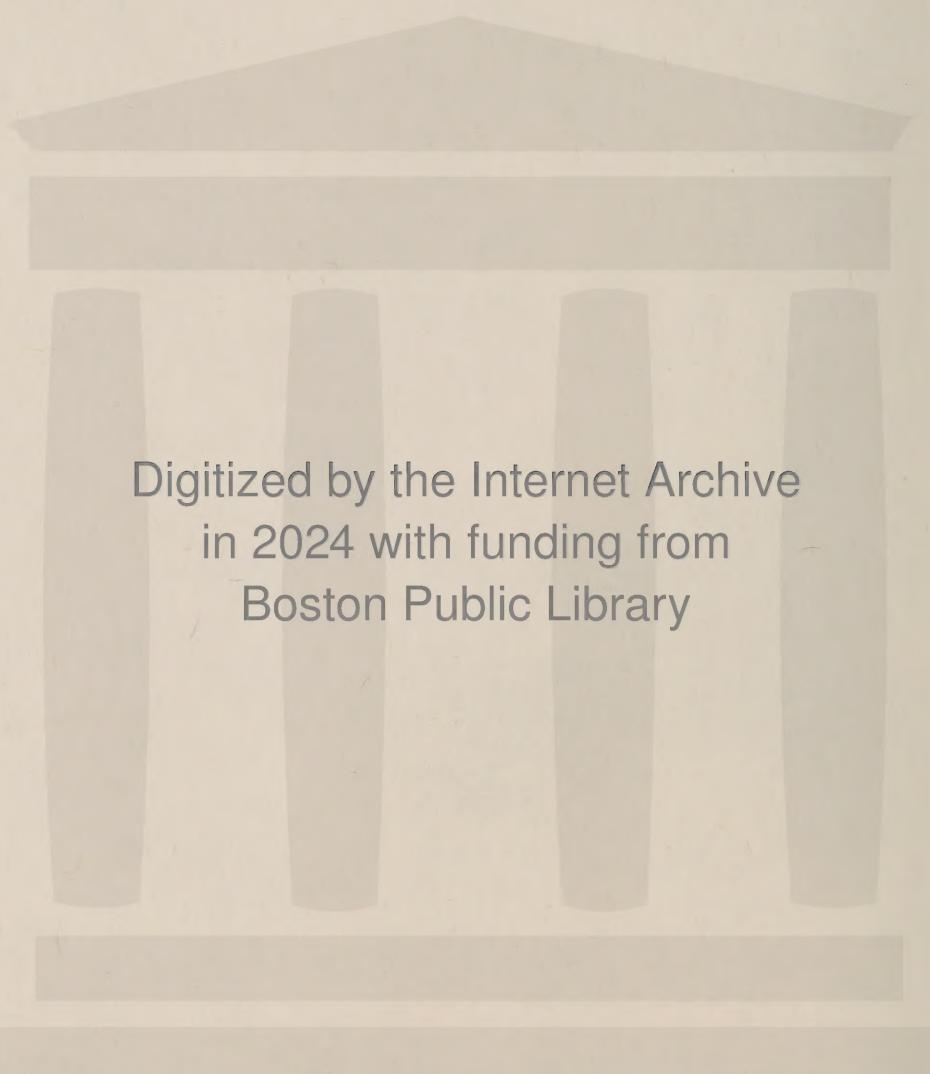
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# GUIDING THE BUILDING BOOM

## STUDY OF AREAS SUITABLE OR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

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GREATER BOSTON DEVELOPMENT  
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GUIDING THE BUILDING BOOM

A STUDY OF

AREAS SUITABLE FOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT

WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO

SITES FOR VETERANS HOUSING

Prepared by

Greater Boston Development Committee, Inc.

Advisory Committee on Residential Land Use Study

80 Federal Street

Boston 10, Mass.

January 1947



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## GUIDING THE BUILDING BOOM

### AREAS SUITABLE FOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO SITES FOR VETERANS' HOUSING

#### I. PURPOSE AND SCOPE OF THE STUDY

The Greater Boston Development Committee, a private agency devoted to a program of greatly needed regional improvements, has undertaken this study as a contribution to current thinking concerning the location of new residential construction. Particular emphasis is laid on sites most suitable for homes for veterans.

The Massachusetts State Planning Board and the Greater Boston Development Committee have cooperated in this study. The Committee has furnished the Board with its findings as its sincere contribution to the broader study and analysis of zoning in relation to housing areas that the Board has completed, pursuant to Chapter 43 of the Resolves of 1946 of the Great and General Court approved May 31, 1946. That resolve called for a study of zoning laws in metropolitan areas over 50,000 population, with a view to determining the quantity of land available for moderately-priced homes and rental housing units. The National Housing Agency has estimated that there is need for 50,000 additional housing units for veterans, in the Boston Metropolitan Area. With the removal of price controls, and the increasing availability of previously critical materials, it is anticipated that building in volume will shortly get underway.

The purpose of this study is to indicate on a map the location of tracts of raw land which are most suitable for the building of new medium and moderate priced houses. The study is an inventory of vacant land, five acres or more in size. The inventory is intended as a guide for local community officials, lending institutions, real estate developers, and the postwar home owner. By the force of good example, it is hoped that new building may be guided to locations most suited to residential use. By this means the welfare of the community, the builder, and the home owner can best be served.

With the lack of housing accommodations so critical, there is a great possibility that a rampant building boom may spring up suddenly, and a boom might repeat past mistakes in residential planning and construction. A main purpose of this study is to focus attention and interest upon the most suitable residential land for larger-scale building operations, which will exert important influence upon local communities, especially the suburban towns where most of the building can be expected to take place.

This report includes a colored map entitled "Areas Most Suitable for Development as Sites for Veterans' Housing". Other unpublished maps, giving additional information,

may be consulted at the offices of the Committee. The study purposely excludes locations where scattered development may take place on individual vacant lots and small groups of lots fronting on streets already laid out. No estimate of the number or location of such isolated lots has been made. This would require a local inventory, more properly undertaken by city and town officials.

The study embraces fifty-three cities and towns within the Greater Boston area. These communities are the forty-three that have membership in the Metropolitan District Commission plus the following ten others, which lie within Boston's commuting zone and within its circle of direct influence:

Bedford	Natick
Burlington	Randolph
Concord	Sharon
Lincoln	Wayland
Lynnfield	Wilmington

## II. TECHNIQUE OF THE STUDY

As this is an inventory of locations that are suitable for new residential building, the Advisory Committee on Residential Land Use has ruled out areas that are swampy, or too steep for development; and also areas that are more appropriately devoted to use as orchards and market gardens, and to industry and business. The combination of all the following criteria is taken to define "suitable land":

1. Tracts of raw land that are five acres minimum in size, regardless of the number of ownerships, but excluding land in institutional or public ownership. Raw land may include "paper street" areas, previously subdivided, but as yet not built upon. The raw land of the study does include private estates and golf courses. The Committee has not sought to determine whether tracts of land are currently available for sale.
2. Land that is zoned for residential purposes only.
3. Land that is not swampy as shown on the U. S. Geological Survey Topographic Maps.
4. Land that is not steeply sloping (15 per cent maximum) as shown on the U. S. Geological Survey Topographic Maps.
5. Land that is not in use as commercial orchards or market gardens, as shown on the State Planning Board W.P.A. land use maps.

In carrying out the study, graduate students in City Planning at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and at Harvard University marked out areas, as defined above, on U. S. Geological Survey Maps. These indications were then reviewed by staff members of the Greater Boston Development Committee, and visits were made to the communities in order to check the areas in the field. In this step, town and city engineers, and in some cases planning board members, were interviewed in order to confirm or modify the preliminary indication of suitable land. Later, the residential areas were transferred to a base map prepared for the Committee from maps furnished by the State Planning Board and by the Department of Public Works. Only areas that conform to all the above listed criteria were indicated.

On the published map, the following color key shows the tracts of land that are suitable for Veterans' Housing.

Orange - Tracts of land well suited to moderate-priced houses or rental housing developments.

Yellow - Tracts of land well suited to medium-priced single-family residential developments.

"Moderate-priced" development is intended to mean that kind of construction that could be carried out under the Federal program for Veterans' Emergency Housing. Under previous priority regulations contained in the Veterans' Emergency Housing Act of 1946, the maximum price was \$10,000 for a single-family house and \$17,000 for a two-family house (Housing Expeditor's Priority Regulations #5, paragraph 805(c)). In this postwar period, before fluctuating prices have leveled off through the operation of the law of supply and demand, "moderate-priced" refers to houses for sale at or below \$10,000 and to rental units that are fixed at \$80 maximum monthly rent.

The term "medium-priced" may range from \$10,000 to \$20,000 and comes within the scope of a veterans' program now that priority regulations and price controls for materials have been eliminated. The new regulations authorize housing construction by Federal permits with veterans' preference for every dwelling unit built for sale or rent. The major restrictions imposed are: the proposed dwelling must be designed for year-round occupancy; the total floor area must not exceed 1,500 square feet; and in the case of rental housing, maximum rents are set at a project average not exceeding \$80 per unit, plus service charges up to \$3 per room. Construction in the price range above \$10,000 previously could be undertaken only if building materials were on hand. Currently, houses in any price range may be built, subject to the remaining restrictions mentioned above.

For the purposes of this study, a house over \$20,000 is considered "high priced". Very little of this luxury-type housing would come within a program for veterans' housing. Tracts of land, which by reason of inaccessibility, neighborhood characteristics and topography, are more adapted to high-priced, single-family, residential development have there-

fore been omitted from the map published to accompany this report. However, these "high-priced" areas were an original part of the Committee's inventory. Such areas are shown on the unpublished map series held in the Committee's office.

In order to assign tracts of land to the most appropriate housing price classification, the zoned lot size was selected as the controlling determinant modified by other factors such as: suitability of location, site development costs, availability of water supply and sewage connections, and general character of the surrounding community. The zoned lot sizes were classified as follows:

- (a) moderate - tracts of suitable land, zoned for apartments, row houses, two-family houses, or single-family houses on minimum lot sizes up through 8,000 square feet, but excluding towns that require larger lot sizes for two-family houses viz. Burlington, Hingham, Lexington, Lincoln, Lynnfield, Reading, Wellesley, Walpole and Westwood.
- (b) medium - tracts of suitable land zoned for single-family houses on minimum lot sizes of 10,000, 12,500 and 15,000 square feet (including Burlington, Hingham, and Lynnfield which permit two-family houses on this larger lot size).
- (c) high - tracts of suitable land zoned for single-family houses only, on minimum lot sizes of 20,000 square feet and over.

(In the State Planning Board survey, previously referred to, zoning and distance from the center of the region were taken as the ruling factors in determining what areas were deemed suitable for moderate-priced development.)

Transportation cost is an element in the cost of shelter and access to transportation increases the desirability of land for development. Hence, the highway framework and the commuter railroad lines are important considerations in site selection. Bus lines are flexible and can be readily extended or supplemented to meet user demand. For this reason, location near existing bus lines is not essential. However, by relating locations of suitable building land to existing lines of transportation, preferred sites for early development can be chosen. Transparent overlays for this purpose have been prepared by the Committee and can be studied at its office.

On the accompanying map there are shown in buff color the cities and towns having more than five hundred acres of vacant land suitable for development for veterans' needs and with sites advantageously located with respect to means of transportation. The cities and towns handicapped by reason of inaccessibility or with sites more suited to high-priced development are colored green. Cities and towns with less than five hundred acres of suitable building land, in terms of the study, are shown in light blue. Cities and towns with no vacant land in areas of five acres or more are shown in dark blue.

### III. RESPONSIBILITY FOR GOOD DEVELOPMENT

During the present critical housing shortage, many people are obliged to accept as "home" any kind of structure that furnishes a place to live. The emergency is being met both by temporary housing and by permanent construction, and the emergency cannot be said to be over until all the temporaries have been replaced by good permanents. Certainly we are moving toward residential construction in volume, with every likelihood of our being near the threshold of a boom. As this materializes, people will be more wary than in the 1920's, and more discriminating as supply approaches demand. There is now a wider knowledge and awareness of good planning practices and of the principles of good development than ever before. People will thus expect good subdivision layout, attractive architectural design, sturdy construction and sound financing procedures.

It will be to the advantage and profit of the developer, the purchaser, the mortgagee and the community, to guide the building boom. Without long-range thinking and action, the disasters of poorly located, wasteful and obsolete subdivisions might be upon us, thus dooming new postwar developments to premature blight and economic loss.



*Fairchild Aerial Survey Inc., N.Y.C.*

Practically all the early new construction will take place on vacant land because large scale demolition of existing housing units - however bad - can hardly be countenanced at the present. Most of the vacant land is in the suburbs. Past mistakes of other real estate booms, both physical and financial, can be avoided. The responsibility rests squarely on the community, the lending institution, and the builder to assure that good physical development does take place.

#### 1. WHAT THE COMMUNITY CAN DO

The community has a primary stake in good development. Wisely planned extension of municipal services - highways, sewers, water supply, schools and the rest - can

materially increase the attractiveness of neighborhoods and the taxable value of land and buildings. It is the unwise, premature subdivision of land in the past that has called for needless expenditure of public money to service widely scattered houses, resulting in unsatisfactory neighborhoods and high taxes. Looking ahead to a boom, municipal officials should see to it that the community is provided with the proper municipal tools - strong and active planning board, master plan, zoning ordinance, subdivision regulations, building code, and capital budget.

(a) Planning Board - The local government will be well advised to be sure that it has a strong and effective planning board with an adequate annual budget. A good planning board can discourage poorly located housing developments by its control over new subdivisions. The board should make the cumulative total of new building result in well organized residential neighborhoods. Scattered and haphazard town growth can be prevented. In addition, it can keep through traffic streets from cutting across residential districts. It can see to it that new shopping centers are provided with adequate off-street parking. It can encourage balanced growth as contrasted to activity in one part of town and creeping blight in others. The planning board can discourage developments that by their physical layout are already obsolete before they are built, and cannot be expected to maintain community and home values. The planning board should confer with the boards of adjacent towns and with the State Planning Board so as to coordinate the solution of problems in neighborhoods that straddle municipal boundaries.

(b) Master Plan - The function of the Master Plan is to lay out in advance the public improvements anticipated to be needed in the future, thus providing a guide to local officials who have responsibility for progressively carrying out the plan. This plan can save money by determining in advance the basic framework for all improvements and their relation to each other. The community will then know from its Master Plan where schools, transportation lines, and probable future shopping centers should be. Developments, large or small, can be fitted in as parts of the whole, and the dimensions of streets, trunk sewers and water lines can be reasonably predetermined.

(c) Zoning - The zoning ordinance should provide for a reasonable expectation of growth. Its function of controlling population density is performed in one and two-family districts by requiring minimum lot areas and minimum lot widths for different districts and dwelling types. For apartment houses, bulk or floor area ratio regulations are now considered better practice than detailed yard, court and height restrictions, as they allow greater freedom of design.

A new trend in zoning is to provide discretionary jurisdiction to zoning boards of appeal to vary the detailed provisions of zoning ordinances, where desirable to meet the needs of large scale community developments embracing a desirable variety of housing types, such as free standing single-family houses, row houses, and garden apartments. This discretionary jurisdiction can be written into the text of zoning ordinances,

in such a way as to apply only to developments exceeding a certain number of acres in extent, and with safeguards assuring that the general purposes and intent of the zoning ordinance, and average overall densities shall be adhered to. The reason for the broad latitude of this discretionary regulation is to make possible better balanced design and more harmonious community development than can be achieved if each house must have its separate minimum lot, and if each type of residential district must be set off separately on a map from other types of district. The effect achieved is a campus type of development with appropriate proportions of different kinds of residential buildings.

It is not a proper function of zoning to forbid the erection of dwellings below a certain cost, size or quality. Such limitations are however possible in deed restrictions. Zoning ordinances should be reexamined to make sure that they will promote well-balanced communities and provide adequate protection for home neighborhoods. It is recommended that local officials consult the State Planning Board as a preliminary step in evaluating present zoning provisions as related to the postwar housing problem.

(d) Subdivision Control - The full power granted by the state enabling legislation for control of new subdivisions should be vested in the planning board or board of survey, so as to reduce both the developers' and the municipality's costs, by assuring efficient layout plans. Determination of the size of water mains and sewers, and the design of the street system is made by the board as a condition of subdivision approval, prior to official recording of the plat. Subdivision review is the best way to secure stable neighborhoods with needed community services and to discourage purely speculative developments. Sound subdivision control can also avoid out-dated, monotonous, and excessively wasteful gridiron street layouts. By approval of plats, the planning board has full power to coordinate street systems of proposed subdivisions with existing streets in adjacent areas. It can assist the subdivider in fitting his street plan to the topography and in providing needed traffic streets. The board may require the subdivider to post a bond for all utilities and improvements that are to be furnished as part of the development cost.

(e) Building Code - Many municipalities in Massachusetts do not have local building codes, and construction is therefore governed only by somewhat general provisions of state law. As the result, a building boom can generate a great deal of housing that is not a credit to the community and because of its poor design and quality may rapidly deteriorate into shanty towns. In the municipalities that do have building codes, there is another danger: inflexible codes tend to produce stereotyped housing, dictated by outmoded restrictions, techniques and trade customs. The out-of-date building code increases construction costs, particularly in these days of shortages of standard products, and prevents the use of new kinds of materials and types of construction that have met standards of test.

(f) Capital Budget - Community officials should study the long-term financial requirements for public improvements needed for the expansion of residential areas. The wise municipality will invest in capital improvements only on the basis of a budgeted pro-

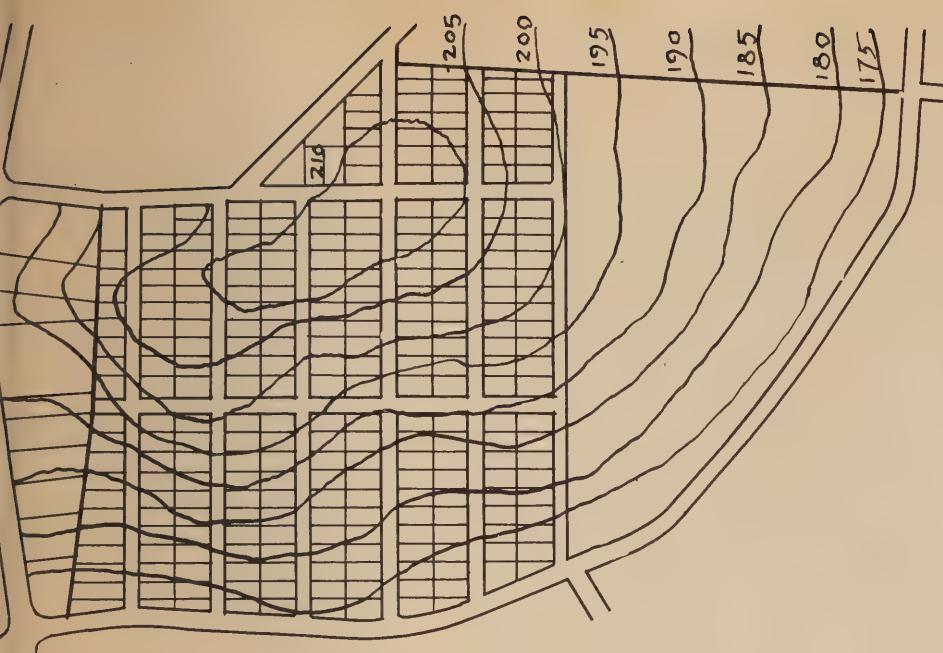
gram prepared in relation to a Master Plan. In this way unforeseen expenditures and possible duplication of facilities can be avoided. New building developments evidently should be encouraged in areas now adequately served by existing utilities and improvements, rather than obliging the municipality to assume the high cost of providing services in virgin areas not yet ripe for development.

## 2. WHAT THE LENDING INSTITUTION CAN DO

Financial institutions are in a position to exercise a beneficent control over standards of site planning and building construction. Before loaning the builder his capital or the owner his mortgage money, the banks can examine the proposed structure in its relation to the neighborhood. Banks can encourage new development on the best available sites, which have the characteristics shown on the accompanying map. It is to the interest of all lending agencies - saving banks, commercial banks, insurance companies, and building and loan societies - to adopt comparable standards and mortgage practices so as to secure uniformity of policy. In a building boom it is important that lending institutions do not compete with one another by making loans on markedly different qualities of construction. It is paramount for security of long term mortgages that sound construction standards and sound community planning be insisted upon as safeguards for the investment. The lending institutions can work in close cooperation with local planning boards to secure good developments through proper street layouts, adequate lot sizes, and required utilities and improvements, so that the new development will maintain its value throughout the term of the initial mortgages. Everyone recognizes that a well-planned development will depreciate at a slower rate than a badly planned one. Hence, anything that slows up the process of neighborhood depreciation is certainly to the best financial interest of the mortgage investor.

## 3. WHAT THE DEVELOPER CAN DO

In the final analysis, it is the developer who brings into being new housing accommodations and new residential areas. The quality of his contribution to the general well-being of the community is measured by the degree of his responsibility. A developer who has a long term interest in his investment rather than merely the hope for a quick profit will seek to achieve the best possible community in the price class of houses he is offering for sale or rental. The enlightened builder is quick to realize the increasing purchaser resistance to ramshackle construction and to street systems that became obsolete many years ago. A modern developer will seek advice of local planning boards, mortgage institutions, qualified land surveyors, trained site planners and the Federal Housing Administration. The larger building operator can embark on comprehensive plans for the construction of adequate and desirable communities. Small builders can take advantage of community planning principles by working in cooperation with each other and developing adjacent tracts of land with well designed street patterns, which dovetail with the surrounding area. No longer will endless rows of identical houses satisfy the prospective home



**POOR PLANNING** - Gridiron layout unadapted to the topography results in small uneconomical blocks with excessive street pavement and length of utilities; produces monotonous rows of houses having poor orientation on narrow lots. Traffic can cut through the area at will. Satisfactory development of the adjacent tract of land would be difficult. This results in an area with patches of crowded houses and unimproved land making blight almost certain.



**GOOD PLANNING** - Streets related to the topography allow for large blocks with resultant savings in pavement and utility costs. Opportunities are produced for variety in building groupings. Wider lots furnish a measure of flexibility for house orientation and individual lot development. Traffic is discouraged from cutting through the development. Both tracts of land have been subdivided so as to produce a unified home neighborhood, which will maintain its value both to the resident and to the developer at no greater cost than the layout shown above. The total length of interior streets is less for both tracts in this plan than for the smaller area laid out in the top illustration.

owner. As building conditions improve and housing units become more plentiful, the buyer will once again be able to exercise a choice in his selection of a house for purchase or rental. The developer who offers a well built and modern dwelling in a planned environment will enjoy a marked advantage in the competitive market.

#### IV. TRENDS, POLICIES AND FACTORS IN LAND DEVELOPMENT

As mentioned previously, the housing shortage will be eased as more new structures are built on vacant tracts of land. Every site selected should be plainly suitable for the specific type of house contemplated. Every development must have appeal as a really good place to live, not merely as a port in a storm. This can be achieved by good planning, regardless of the income group that is to be served.

##### **1. THE SUBURBAN TREND**

The suburb is the product of modern transportation. Families desire pleasant neighborhoods in which to live and raise their children. They must have homes within reasonable reach of their places of work. Time is more important than distance. Increasing use of private automobiles, new highways, expanding and improved bus service, rapid transit and railway lines are the means that make suburban growth possible. Also, suburban municipalities are attractive because they usually have lower real estate taxes than big cities, and a somewhat lower general cost of living.

Suburban expansion also marks a popular reaction to the over-crowded and obsolete built-up neighborhoods in the central core of the region. New growth in new areas can avoid the mistakes of the past: monotonous gridiron streets; stereotyped houses closely packed on narrow lots; ugliness; lack of play space; lack of a community center with shops, churches and school; heavy traffic cutting through local residential streets. It is important to recognize these mistakes of the 1920's. Failure to do so would doom our postwar building efforts to depreciation, obsolescence and blight. In the current housing emergency, the opportunity for rebuilding old areas is limited until supply catches up sufficiently with demand so that old houses can be torn down and replaced in quantity. The immediate problem to be solved is thus the effective and modern utilization of available suburban land.

##### **2. AVAILABILITY OF SUBURBAN SITES**

The first step in the problem of building a community of houses is evidently the selection of a suitable site. The Boston Metropolitan Area is a mixture of urban, suburban and rural elements. The center of the region is largely built up (see the municipalities in dark blue and light blue on the accompanying map). In the whole Boston Metropolitan area, based on the criteria of this study, there are 173 square miles of suitable building land. About 30 per cent of this area falls logically in the higher priced home market, but the other 70 per cent represents land which is suitable for "medium" and "moderate" priced

homes. Tracts of land in these two latter categories are indicated in yellow and orange respectively on the accompanying map, and occur in the following municipalities: (for a listing of acreage in each municipality see the table appended at the end of this report).

Arlington  
Bedford  
Belmont  
Braintree  
Brookline (medium only)  
Burlington  
Canton  
Cohasset  
Concord  
Dedham  
Dorchester, Hyde Park  
and West Roxbury  
Hingham (medium only)  
Lexington (medium only)  
Lincoln (medium only)  
Lynn  
Lynnfield  
Malden  
Medford  
Melrose



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Milton (medium only)	Stoughton
Natick (medium only)	Swampscott
Needham	Wakefield
Newton	Walpole
Norwood	Waltham
Quincy	Watertown
Randolph	Wayland (medium only)
Reading	Wellesley (medium only)
Revere	Westwood
Saugus	Weymouth
Sharon	Wilmington
Stoneham	Winchester
	Woburn

All of this land in these municipalities is favored by accessibility to Boston by good existing highways or public transportation. Locations lying beyond the range of community rail lines have been included, because they can be reached easily by private automobile or bus line extensions. Some of the land, however, is not ripe for development because of the unavailability of water and sewer connections. It should also be noted that only a very small percentage of the land is now zoned for apartments and row houses. This point is discussed in further detail in Section V, 1.

### 3. LOCAL POLICIES TOWARD NEW DEVELOPMENT

Very few of the cities and towns of the Metropolitan Region have completed Master Plans to guide their future growth. The policy of local communities toward new building development is expressed mainly in zoning ordinances, subdivision regulations, and building codes where these exist. There has been a gradual tightening of controls over land development. Generally those cities and towns that have accepted the provisions of the improved planning enabling act (Chapter 211 of 1936, or General Laws, Ch. 41, pars. 81A to 81J incl.) have adopted a strong policy directed toward the review of new subdivisions. These communities are:

Brookline	Lynnfield	Stoneham
Burlington	Malden	Swampscott
Canton	Medford	Walpole
Chelsea	Melrose	Wayland
Cohasset	Milton	Wellesley
Concord	Nahant	Weston
Dover	Natick	Westwood
Everett	Needham	Weymouth
Hingham	Saugus	Winthrop
Lincoln	Sharon	Woburn

Other towns such as Dedham, Lexington, Newton, Norwood, Reading and Wayland require the developer to post a bond for guarantee of good faith in the installation of roads and utilities. Through their Boards of Survey, these towns exercise powers of subdivision control under Sections 81F through 81J of the enabling act.

Since 1940, twenty-four cities or towns including Boston have revised their zoning ordinances, placing minimum lot size requirements in the regulations. All new construction on land not subdivided prior to these revisions must be guided by their stipulations.

In examining zoning provisions in effect in the communities of the Boston metropolitan area, a trend is seen which adapts lot size requirements to purposes of sound community development by taking into account the type of house that is currently in demand. This type is the single-family, free-standing house with attached garage, which requires a wider lot than was formerly customary. Also, districts requiring larger minimum sized lots have frequently been established to insure less intensive development and a resulting higher quality of neighborhood. This represents a permanent gain for the home owner. The majority of the outlying towns in the western and northern parts of the region have adopted the policy of zoning their substantial acreages of open land for lots of roughly half an acre to one acre in size, so as to insure this open character. Where land is not physically suited to smaller lot development, such as steeply sloping hillsides, wooded areas, rocky land and low-lying marshes, there is even more reason for large lots. Towns providing for

areas of 20,000, 25,000, 30,000, and 40,000 square feet minimum lot size are listed on page 17 of this report.

#### 4. STATE LEGISLATION RELATING TO VETERANS' HOUSING

The first and most critical objective in coping with the general housing shortage is to provide places for returned veterans to live. The types of housing that the veterans need are rental houses or apartments, and small owner-occupied homes, in that order of urgency.

The 1946 session of the Massachusetts Legislature enacted a Veterans' Emergency Housing Law, which provided cities and towns with several new procedures for relieving the housing shortage for veterans by direct action on the part of the municipality (St. 1946 Chap. 372 as clarified by Chap. 568). An increasing number of municipalities, such as Boston, Lawrence, Pittsfield, Wellesley, Norwood and Milton are taking active steps to build houses or provide lots for veterans, under the terms of this law. These forms of publicly sponsored housing will benefit greatly by adherence to sound principles of site selection and planning. In the case of municipally constructed dwellings, the law provides that these shall be rented for the period of the emergency, construed as five years, and then sold. The city or town is thus making an investment that must be assured of retaining its value, not only in physical quality but also in resistance to obsolescence.

The Legislature also established a Veterans' Emergency Housing Commission empowered to grant variances in local zoning and building laws during the period of the emergency, and to expedite housing construction (St. 1946, Chap. 592).

Finally, the legislature passed an act that is a complete rewriting of the Massachusetts Housing Authority Law of 1938, with several new sections inserted to provide for land assembly and redevelopment projects (St. 1946, Chap. 574). Additional housing measures, particularly pointed toward the veterans' needs, will be the subject of consideration by the 1947 session of the legislature.

#### 5. RETENTION OF EXISTING ZONING CONTROLS

There are many locations in the metropolitan area where land is suitable for private buildings designed to answer the veterans' urgent needs. These locations can be developed within the existing framework of zoning regulations. It is not necessary to undertake large scale and less restrictive rezoning, and thus to overthrow the basic controls that have been laid down for the protection of property values, in order to provide new moderately priced housing for veterans during the current emergency. Generally, the land that is most suitable for such development is that which is already zoned for smaller lot sizes or for multi-family use. On the map accompanying this report, the areas where land

is suitable for large scale veterans' projects are indicated by the yellow and orange tracts.

## 6. COST OF LOT IN RELATION TO COST OF HOUSE

Large lot sizes do not necessarily mean higher lot cost per house where raw acreage prices are low. It is a useful rule of thumb that the cost of the lot with full street and lot improvements should not generally exceed 20 per cent of the total cost of house and lot with roughly 7 per cent representing the cost of the raw land and 13 per cent the cost of the utility connections, desirable grading, sidewalks and street paving, etc. This ratio of lot cost to total cost will vary little with fluctuations in prices.

As an example, in a development of \$10,000 houses on 7,500 square foot lots, the raw land should cost no more than \$3,500 an acre. Higher priced land cannot usually be developed successfully for moderate priced single-family houses, as building lots would be unable to meet the competition of less costly house sites in other locations. The fundamental factors that determine the sale price of a building lot may be grouped as follows:

- (a) Cost of raw acreage land, determined by topography; by accessibility to transportation, shopping centers, schools, parks and churches; and by the general character of the surrounding community.
- (b) Cost of rough grading.
- (c) Cost of streets and necessary street improvements, including land appropriated for streets, grading, paving, gutters, curbs, sidewalks, street trees, sewers, water mains.
- (d) Cost of lot improvements, including finished grading, seeding, planting, garage driveways, and house connections to utilities in the street.
- (e) Interest, carrying charges, sales expense, and profit.

It is necessary to distinguish between local improvements, which the developer should supply, and general improvements for the community, which are paid for through taxation. With some variations in community practice, the local improvements are grading, street paving, sidewalks, planting, sewer and water connections to the building. General improvements paid for through taxation are street lighting, part of the water supply, main trunk sewers and access highway construction. If the local improvements are not required to be made by the developer, as a prerequisite to subdivision approval, they must be undertaken at the expense of the municipality, and paid for by general taxes, or assessed against the property as a local benefit.

## V. SUMMARY OF FINDINGS ON LOCATION OF SUITABLE BUILDING LAND

### 1. TOTAL LAND AVAILABLE IN FIVE-ACRE TRACTS

There is no shortage of land, within the Boston Region, physically suitable for residential development.

Of the areas five acres or larger in size, there is a gross acreage of approximately 107,400 acres or 173 square miles distributed through all but six of the fifty-three cities and towns included in this survey.

The total area may be divided as follows:

	<u>sq. miles</u>	<u>per cent</u>
*Land suitable for high-priced houses	51	30
Land suitable for medium-priced houses	89	51
Land suitable for moderate-priced houses	33	19
Total	173	100

The major portion of the suitable, residential building land is located in the north-western, western, and southwestern sectors of the Boston Metropolitan region. The six municipalities built-up to the extent that there is no vacant residential building land available in areas of five acres or more are: Chelsea, Everett, Hull, Nahant, Somerville and Winthrop.

Of the land suitable for moderate-priced development, there is only 2086 acres or less than 2 per cent of the total, zoned for apartment development. Of this total, 128 acres is divided among six municipalities, viz., Boston, Brookline, Dedham, Medford, Melrose, and Newton; and approximately 1900 acres are located in Woburn, a city in which blanket zoning provisions will permit any type of residential building. There is available roughly 5,600 acres of residential building land in the two unzoned communities (Cohasset and Stoughton), but here the factors of transportation costs and distance from Boston tend to make these locations unsuitable for any development other than for the limited needs of local veterans. The shortage of sites zoned for apartment and row house development indicates a probable need for rezoning some areas otherwise suitable for the erection of rental housing projects. Selection of specific areas that might be rezoned is manifestly beyond the scope of this study.

\*Not shown on map, because not likely to be developed for Veterans' housing.

## 2 . MUNICIPALITIES WITH NO ZONING RESTRICTIONS ON LOT SIZE

Chelsea	Malden	Stoughton (not zoned)
Cohasset (not zoned)	Somerville	Winthrop
Everett		Woburn

## 3 . MUNICIPALITIES PERMITTING HOUSES ON LOTS OF 8000 SQUARE FEET OR SMALLER

The following cities and towns are those that make provision for fairly small minimum lot size in their existing zoning ordinances (8000 square feet, 7500 square feet, 6000 square feet or under, with lot frontages of 50 to 80 feet), and thus offer the most evident opportunities for veterans' housing:

Arlington	Norwood
Bedford**	Quincy
Belmont**	Randolph
Boston**	Revere
Braintree	Saugus
Brookline**	Sharon
Cambridge	Stoneham
Canton	Swampscott
Dedham**	Wakefield
Lynn	Walpole
Medford	Waltham**
Melrose	Watertown**
Milton**	Westwood**
Natick**	Weymouth
Needham**	Wilmington
Newton	Winchester**

## 4 . MUNICIPALITIES WITH DISTRICTS REQUIRING MEDIUM SIZED LOTS FOR SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSES

The following cities and towns, in certain residential districts, require minimum sized lots of 10,000 to 15,000 square feet with 60 to 150 feet of frontage for a free-standing single-family house:

\*\* Indicates that land zones for small house lots is limited to a small proportion of the total vacant and suitable acreage of building land that lies within the municipality.

<u>15,000 sq. ft.</u>	<u>10,000 sq. ft.</u>
Belmont	Belmont
Braintree	Burlington**
Brookline**	Canton
Canton	Lynnfield (2-family permitted)
Newton	Natick
Reading	Needham
Wayland**	Newton
Wellesley	Reading
Westwood**	Sharon
Winchester	Wayland**
<u>12,500 sq. ft.</u>	Wellesley
Hingham (2-family permitted)	Wilmington
Lexington	Winchester
<u>12,000 sq. ft.</u>	
Westwood**	

## 5. MUNICIPALITIES WITH DISTRICTS REQUIRING LARGE LOTS FOR SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSES

Fourteen communities provide, in certain residential districts, for an open type of development by requiring minimum sized lots of 20,000 to 40,000 square feet with 100 or 150 feet of frontage for a free-standing single-family house as follows:

<u>40,000 sq. ft.</u>	<u>25,000 sq. ft.</u>
Bedford	Brookline
Brookline	
Concord	<u>20,000 sq. ft.</u>
Dedham	Bedford
Dover (1 Acre)	Burlington
Lincoln	Concord
Milton (with special provisions for 32,000 sq. ft. lot sizes)	Dover (1/2 Acre)
Needham (1 Acre)	Lincoln (by Bd. of Appeal)
Reading	Milton (with special provisions for 16,000 sq. ft. lot sizes)
Weston	Wayland
Westwood	Wellesley
<u>30,000 sq. ft.</u>	Weston
Weston	

\*\*Indicates that land zoned for small house lots is limited to a small proportion of the total vacant and suitable acreage of building land that lies within the municipality.

## 6 THREE-FAMILY HOUSES AND APARTMENTS

All municipalities permit three-family houses and apartments, except the following:

Belmont (3-family houses only)	Milton	Wayland
Burlington	Norwood	Wellesley
Dover	Sharon	Weston
Hingham		Weymouth
Lynnfield		Winthrop

The municipalities listed below permit construction of three-family houses and apartments only under certain specific restrictions such as by permit of the Board of Appeal or when located in business zones:

Bedford (Board of Appeal)	Stoneham (Board of Appeal)
Canton (Business Zone)	Wakefield (Board of Appeal)
Concord (Business Zone)	Walpole (Board of Selectmen
Lincoln (Business Zone)	only in business zone)
Nahant (Business Zone)	Westwood (Business Zone)
Needham (Business Zone)	Wilmington (Business Zone)
Saugus (Business Zone)	Winchester (Business Zone)

## 7 MUNICIPALITIES PERMITTING TWO-FAMILY DUPLEX OR SEMI-DETACHED HOUSES, OR BOTH

Thirty-four communities permit construction of two-family duplex or semi-detached houses on varying lot sizes, as follows:

<u>20,000 sq. ft.</u>	<u>8,500 sq. ft.</u>
Burlington (either type)	Walpole (either type but 4250 sq. ft. per family)
<u>12,500 sq. ft.</u>	Westwood (either type)
Hingham (semi-detached)	
Lexington (either type)	
<u>12,000 sq. ft.</u>	<u>8,000 sq. ft.</u>
Lincoln (either type)	Medford (semi-detached in single Res. Zone)
<u>10,000 sq. ft.</u>	<u>7,500 sq. ft.</u>
Lynnfield (semi-detached)	Bedford (either type)
Reading (either type)	Dedham (either type and row houses)
Wellesley (either type also row houses for 3 or more families)	Randolph (either type)
	Winchester (either type)

<u>7,000 sq. ft.</u>	<u>5,500 sq. ft.</u>
Stoneham (either type)	Lynn (semi-detached in single Res. Zone)
Waltham (either type)	
<u>6,500 sq. ft.</u>	<u>5,400 sq. ft.</u>
Canton (either type)	Quincy (duplex and 4-family)
<u>6,000 sq. ft.</u>	<u>5,000 sq. ft.</u>
Arlington (either type)	Cambridge (either type)
Medford (either type)	Lynn (either type)
Melrose (either type)	Revere (either type)
Nahant (either type)	Saugus (duplex)
Natick (either type)	Watertown (either type)
Norwood (either type also 3-family)	Weymouth (either type)
Saugus (semi-detached)	
Wakefield (either type)	<u>4,000 sq. ft.</u>
	Hull (either type)

## 8. MUNICIPALITIES RESTRICTED ENTIRELY TO FREE-STANDING SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSES

Dover

Milton

Wayland

## VI. CONCLUSION

Let us face the fact that, when building material bottlenecks have been broken and prices have shifted to levels determined by supply and demand, the present critical housing shortage contains the potentiality of a boom in residential construction. New housing units must be provided quickly, especially homes for veterans. The Veterans' greatest need is for rental units - houses and apartments - and moderately priced single family houses-for-sale. In fact the President's statement liberalizing the Federal housing policy, released on December 14, 1946, makes clear that the main point of emphasis in the housing program for 1947 is to be rental housing.

It is to the interest of every community, every builder, every mortgagee and every veteran-to-be-housed, that the housing job be done well. This requires selection of the best available sites, and exercise of sound judgment in planning, design and construction, guided by wise controls on the part of mortgagees and local governments. With the progress of technical knowledge during the past 25 years it is certainly to be expected of our postwar civilization that we shall achieve far better communities of homes than some of those that sprang up during the boom of the 1920's.

Some part of the housing shortage will be met by direct action by municipal governments, under recently enacted state laws. Some part will be met by large lending institu-

tions empowered by law to build housing developments for their own account. But most of the housing construction will have to be done by private builders, financed by mortgage institutions.

The Greater Boston Development Committee, Inc., through its Advisory Committee on Residential Land Use, has prepared this report, with the map of suitable areas for housing, as an aid to all who have responsible participation in solving the housing problem and guiding the postwar growth of communities in this region.

**TABULATION OF QUANTITY OF VACANT LAND SUITABLE  
FOR RESIDENTIAL DEVELOPMENT**

City or Town	Total acreage of land suitable for residential de- velopment. (See note below)	Acreage Suitable for Moderate- priced develop- ment. (orange on map)	Acreage Suitable for Medium- priced develop- ment. (yellow on map)	Acreage Suitable for High-priced development. (not shown on map)
Arlington	480	434	46	-
Bedford	2,778	415	2,363	-
Belmont	512	108	94	310
Boston	1,337	793	117	427
Braintree	3,544	2,016	1,528	-
Brookline	1,179	85	230	864
Burlington	3,436	143	3,293	-
Cambridge	38	38	-	-
Canton	4,288	422	2,766	1,080
Chelsea	-	-	-	-
Cohasset	1,504	30	964	510
Concord	4,454	128	2,420	1,906
Dedham	2,406	1,013	238	1,155
Dover	4,684	-	282	4,402
Everett	-	-	-	-
Hingham	3,328	-	2,810	518
Hull	-	-	-	-
Lexington	4,298	18	3,848	432
Lincoln	3,078	-	1,115	1,963
Lynn	352	352	-	-
Lynnfield	2,944	980	1,964	-
Malden	70	70	-	-
Medford	137	137	-	-
Melrose	264	264	-	-

Milton	2,976	133	409	2,434
Nahant	-	-	-	-
Natick	3,028	-	2,033	995
Needham	3,408	388	1,196	1,824
Newton	2,089	489	1,275	325
Norwood	2,208	1,378	830	-
Quincy	416	416	-	-
Randolph	3,104	1,879	1,225	-
Reading	2,240	525	1,715	-
Revere	256	256	-	-
Saugus	832	832	-	-
Sharon	5,721	25	4,531	1,165
Somerville	-	-	-	-
Stoneham	956	355	601	-
Stoughton	4,096	930	2,126	1,040
Swampscott	399	141	198	-
Wakefield	966	711	255	-
Walpole	7,078	1,527	4,329	1,222
Waltham	1,344	730	432	182
Watertown	150	150	-	-
Wayland	3,648	-	320	3,328
Wellesley	1,290	-	569	721
Weston	3,808	-	123	3,685
Westwood	4,662	246	2,794	1,622
Weymouth	1,984	570	1,414	-
Wilmington	2,771	806	1,965	-
Winchester	960	85	755	120
Winthrop	-	-	-	-
Woburn	1,958	203	1,755	-
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>107,399 Acres</b>	<b>20,241</b>	<b>54,928</b>	<b>32,230</b>
	or	or	or	or
	173.4 sq. mi.	18.8%	51.2%	30%

In summary: Of the total land suitable for residential development:

18.8% (33 sq. mi.) is suitable for moderate-priced single-family or rental housing development.

51.2% (89 sq. mi.) is suitable for medium-priced development.

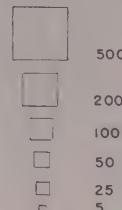
30% (51 sq. mi.) is suitable for high-priced single-family development.

NOTE-- The acreage figure in this column will not entirely agree with the total acreage figure for the same city or town contained in column 1 of the residential area survey made by the State Planning Board in accordance with Chapter 43 of the Resolves of 1946 owing to the fact that the Board's study incorporates somewhat different criteria for "suitability", namely, the inclusion of land that is within unrestricted and industrial zones, as well as market gardens and orchards over 5 acres in size, when otherwise suitable for residence.



# AREAS SUITABLE FOR DEVELOPMENT AS SITES FOR VETERANS HOUSING

TRACT ACREAGE SCALE



AREAS SHOWN ARE THOSE TRACTS OF LAND, 5 ACRES OR MORE IN SIZE, NOT IN PUBLIC OR INSTITUTIONAL OWNERSHIP NOR IN USE AS COMMERCIAL MARKET GARDENS OR ORCHARDS. THESE AREAS ARE ZONED FOR RESIDENTIAL USE AND ARE SUITABLE BY REASON OF TOPOGRAPHY, ACCESSIBILITY AND NEIGHBORHOOD FACTORS FOR DEVELOPMENT AS LARGE-SCALE RENTAL OR OWNER-OCCUPIED HOUSING UNITS FOR VETERANS.

BUILT-UP MUNICIPALITIES WITH NO SUITABLE BUILDING LAND IN 5 ACRE TRACTS.



PARTIALLY BUILT-UP MUNICIPALITIES. WITH SUITABLE BUILDING LAND LIMITED TO LESS THAN 500 ACRES.



MUNICIPALITIES WITH OVER 500 ACRES IN SUITABLE SITES AND FAVORED BY ACCESSIBILITY.



MUNICIPALITIES WITH OVER 500 ACRES IN SUITABLE SITES BUT HANDICAPPED BY INACCESSIBILITY AND MOSTLY SUITABLE FOR HIGH-PRICED DEVELOPMENT.



AREAS WELL SUITED TO MODERATE PRICED SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSE OR RENTAL HOUSING DEVELOPMENT.



AREAS WELL SUITED TO MEDIUM PRICED SINGLE-FAMILY HOUSE DEVELOPMENT.



CITIES AND TOWNS INCLUDED IN THIS STUDY ARE THOSE HAVING MEMBERSHIP IN THE M.D.C. PLUS TEN OTHERS INDICATED THUS

SOURCES OF INFORMATION  
FIELD TRIPS  
LAND USE MAPS  
U.S.G.S. SHEETS  
CITY AND TOWN MAPS  
CITY AND TOWN ENGINEERS  
PLANNING BOARDS  
STATE PLANNING BOARD

GREATER BOSTON DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE INC. 80 FEDERAL ST.  
BOSTON, MASS.

JANUARY 1947



BASE MAP COMPILED FROM MAPS PREPARED BY THE COMMONWEALTH OF MASSACHUSETTS STATE PLANNING BOARD & DEPARTMENT OF PUBLIC WORKS

GREATER BOSTON DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE INC.



















